

USS Constitution Hosting Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

Story by Mass Communication Specialist Kathryn E. Macdonald

CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD, Mass. -- Old Ironsides will hold it's annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony December 5 at 4 p.m. aboard the ship. The event is free and open to the public.

The ceremony will commence following evening colors at sunset and a shot fired from USS Constitution's port saluting battery, and culminate in the lighting of the 18-foot tree near the ship's stern.

"We'll have cookies and hot chocolate, and most importantly, lots of children will be here to enjoy the Christmas tree aboard America's Ship of State," said USS Constitution's 71st and current commanding officer, Cmdr. Timothy Cooper. "We'll be holding a drawing to allow one lucky winner the opportunity to turn on the switch that lights the tree; I think that's a special way to create ties between us and community."

Additionally, USS Constitution has been assured that it is "very, very likely" that a special guest will be in attendance, who will be overjoyed to see all the little boys and girls present.

During this holiday season, Charlestown Navy Yard partners Boston's National Park Service the USS Constitution Museum and Old Ironsides are giving visitors the opportunity to design their own Christmas tree ornaments, and then hang them on the tree aboard the ship.

All visitors to the Charlestown Navy Yard and local families are welcome to stop by the Museum to create their own holiday ornaments with pipe cleaners, beads and lots of creativity! Boston's National Park Service provides the materials, the Museum provides the space to make the ornaments and the Navy provides the tree to decorate," said Anne Grimes Rand, President of the USS Constitution Museum.

The decoration station will be open daily at the Museum from November 20th - December 24th from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. (except for Thanksgiving Day when the Museum is closed).

Celeste Bernardo, the acting superintendent of Boston's National Park Service in the Charlestown Navy Yard, said collaboration benefits the three partners just as much as visitors to the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the world.

"The strengths that the partners - the U.S. Navy, the National Park Service and the non-profit USS Constitution Museum - bring to events in the yard really keep it special," she said. "We all have our individual strengths, but we all share a common mission to celebrate the history of the Navy yard and the ship."

To learn more about Old Ironsides, visit www.history.navy.mil/ussconstitution.